

# **Much Ado About Nothing**

**by William Shakespeare**

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## Chapter One: Love at First Sight

Leonato, the Governor of Messina, was walking in the city with his daughter Hero and his niece Beatrice. The two young women were both beautiful, and they chatted happily to each other as they went along. Leonato watched them both with a smile. He, too, was contented.

Suddenly, a messenger appeared at the far end of the street. He was looking for the Governor. When he saw Leonato, he ran up to him with a letter in his hand. He bowed in front of the Governor, and handed him the letter.

Leonato opened the letter and read it quickly.

'Is Don Pedro coming here?' he asked the messenger.

'Yes, sir,' the messenger replied. 'The Prince of Aragon is coming to Messina. He will arrive soon.'

'He says here that the army had a great victory,' Leonato said. 'Did we lose many soldiers<sup>①</sup> in the battle?'

'No, sir,' the messenger said proudly. 'Very few of our men were killed, I am happy to say.'

Leonato was pleased.

'That's good news,' he commented. He turned to the letter again. 'I see that Don Pedro is very pleased with the young Florentine, Claudio.'

'True, sir,' the messenger confirmed. 'The Prince has honoured Claudio for his courage in the battle.'

'What about Benedick?' Beatrice asked the messenger. 'Have you got any news about him?'

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<sup>①</sup> Did we lose many soldiers: 我方牺牲的战士是不是很多!

'He, too, has come home safely,' the messenger replied politely. 'He is famous for his humour.'

'I'm glad to hear that he's famous for his humour,' Beatrice said coldly. 'It's the only good thing about him.'

The messenger looked at Beatrice in surprise. He thought she was being rude about Benedick, and he did not know how to reply to her.

Leonato saw that the messenger was embarrassed.

'It's all right,' he told the man with a laugh. 'Don't think my niece is serious. Beatrice and Benedick are always telling jokes about each other- she doesn't mean any harm.'

'But tell me,' Beatrice said to the messenger, 'has Benedick got a new friend in the army? He seems to change his best friend every month.'

'Is that really true?' the messenger asked.

'Of course it is,' Beatrice said firmly. 'A friendship is like a hat to Benedick—it lasts until there is a new fashion!'

'I see that Benedick is not in your good books<sup>①</sup>,' the messenger said.

'That's true,' Beatrice replied quickly. 'If Benedick were in my good books, I would never read them again. But you haven't told me — who is Benedick's new friend?'

'Benedick and Claudio are good friends,' the messenger told her. 'They are both brave young men.'

At that moment the Prince of Aragon, Don Pedro, came into the street. There was a crowd of people with him. The messenger could see the Prince's brother, Don John, and several young soldiers, including Benedick and Claudio.

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① in your good books: 得到你的好意。

Leonato stepped forward to greet the Prince.

'Welcome to Messina,' he said politely. 'I am happy that you will be my guest while you are here.'

Don Pedro shook Leonato's hand. Then he looked at Hero.

'Is this your daughter?' he asked.

'Yes, indeed,' Leonato replied. Then he made a little joke. 'At least her, mother has always said Hero is my daughter!'

'Her mother tells you!' Benedick interrupted. 'Do you doubt it, sir?' he joked.

Leonato smiled at the young man. He was not offended<sup>①</sup>, because he knew Benedick's reputation for jokes and humour.

'No sir,' he replied slowly, 'I do not doubt it. Why should I doubt it? You were still a child!'

Don Pedro laughed loudly.

'A good reply, my friend!' he said to Leonato. 'What do you say to that, Benedick?' he asked. 'The Governor means that you have a bad reputation with women!'

Everyone laughed at the Governor's joke except Beatrice. She looked angrily at Benedick.

'What a fool you are,' she told him. 'Can't you see how everyone is laughing at you?'

Benedick did not like Beatrice. He turned to her with an ironical greeting.

'I see you're still alive, Lady Scornful<sup>②</sup>,' he said.

'Of course I'm still alive,' Beatrice replied mockingly. 'My scorn feeds off<sup>③</sup>

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① offended: 被激怒。

② scornful: 轻蔑的。

③ feeds off: 来自。

you — didn't you know that?'

Benedick pretended to laugh at Beatrice's humour.

'All the ladies love me, except you,' he told her proudly. 'But I don't care for any of them.'

'Lucky women!' Beatrice said. 'At least you won't marry one of them and make her unhappy. But I'm like you,' she told him. 'I've got no patience with love.'

'Lucky men!' Benedick replied. 'At least you won't make one of them unhappy.'

Soon the large group of people began to move towards Leonato's house. There was a lot of laughing and joking. Everyone was happy. Claudio touched Benedick's arm, and held him back.

'Just a minute,' he said quietly. 'I want to talk to you.'

'What is it?' Benedick asked, when the two men were alone.

'Did you notice Leonato's daughter Hero?' Claudio asked his friend. 'Did you see how beautiful she is?'

'I didn't really notice her. She's not bad looking, but her cousin Beatrice is far more beautiful,' Benedick said thoughtfully.

'She's the most beautiful girl in the world!' Claudio announced firmly.

Benedick looked closely at his friend.

'You're in love!' he said slowly. 'But surely you're not thinking of getting married?'

Claudio frowned.

'I've never thought about marriage before,' he admitted. 'But if Hero would marry me, I'd certainly be very happy!'

Benedick began to laugh.

'I don't understand you, my friend,' he said with a smile, 'but if it makes

you happy, marry the girl!'

Just then Don Pedro returned to the young men.

'Why have you stayed behind?' he asked. 'What are you talking about? Is it a secret?'

Benedick began to laugh again. He told the Prince about Claudio's love for Hero.

'She's a fine girl,' the Prince told Claudio.

'You needn't laugh,' he told Benedick. 'You'll fall in love one day as well!'

'Never!' Benedick told him. 'I like all women — I'll never surrender to just one woman.'

Don Pedro smiled.

'You'll fall in love one day, my young friend,' he repeated. 'I shall see you pale with love one day.'

'Never!' Benedick said again. 'You may see me pale with illness, or pale with anger, my Lord — but you'll never see me pale with love. I promise you that!'

'We shall see, we shall see,' Don Pedro told him. 'Now go into the house with the others, Benedick — I want to have a serious talk with Claudio about all this.'

Benedick bowed politely to the Prince, and walked towards Leonato's house.

## Chapter Two: A Strategy for Love

Don Pedro and Claudio watched Benedick walk away. Then they went into the garden of Leonato's house, and began to stroll<sup>①</sup> up and down together.

'Well, my friend? What's all this about you and Hero?' the Prince asked gently.

'I think I love her,' Claudio told the Prince. 'I liked her when I saw her last, before we went away to the war. Now that I've seen her again, I'm sure of it — that's the girl for me!'

'She's a good choice,' Don Pedro told him. 'She's a beautiful girl, and she comes from a good family. But why are you so unhappy, Claudio?'

'Perhaps she won't believe I love her!' Claudio said unhappily. 'Perhaps she'll think it's all too sudden.'

'Nonsense,' Don Pedro said. 'Of course she'll believe you. And I'll do what I can to help you. Let me think for a minute.'

The Prince and Claudio were silent, then the Prince laughed. 'I know what to do,' he said suddenly. 'There's going to be a big party at Leonato's house tonight. Everybody will be wearing masks<sup>②</sup>. I'll talk to Hero. I'll pretend to be you, you see?'

A servant was also in the garden that afternoon. He saw the two men walking together, and he was curious to know what they were talking about. The servant hid behind a tree to hear what was being said.

'Me?' Claudio repeated. 'I don't really understand what you mean, sir.'

'Why, it's simple,' Don Pedro said impatiently. 'I'll go up to Hero, and I'll

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① stroll: 散步。

② masks: 面具。



tell her I love her. I'll tell her I've always loved her, that I can't live without her. Then I'll go to her father and tell him everything.'

'Don Pedro's in love with Hero!' the servant said to himself. 'I must go and tell my master immediately!'

He ran quickly back into the house.

'Then you'll be able to marry her!' the Prince said triumphantly. 'What do you think of my plan, Claudio?'

Later that afternoon Leonato and his brother Antonio met in the great house. Antonio had been invited to the party, and he was in a very good mood. The two brothers greeted each other affectionately<sup>①</sup>.

'I was looking for you,' Antonio said merrily<sup>②</sup>. 'I've got some extraordinary<sup>③</sup> news for you!'

'News? What kind of news?' Leonato asked.

'The Prince is in love with your daughter,' Antonio told him.

'Don Pedro in love with Hero?' Leonato said. He was very surprised. 'But how do you know this? Who told you?'

'One of my servants was in the garden earlier,' Antonio explained. 'He saw Don Pedro and Claudio talking together. He heard the Prince say that he would speak to Hero at the party tonight—he's going to tell her he loves her!'

'I can hardly<sup>④</sup> believe it,' Leonato said thoughtfully. 'I'd better tell Hero about this — then she'll know what to do if the Prince speaks to her.'

Although most of Leonato's guests were looking forward to<sup>⑤</sup> the party,

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① affectionately: 充满深情的。

② merrily: 快乐的。

③ extraordinary: 非同寻常的。

④ hardly: 几乎不。

⑤ looking forward to: 期待。

there was one man who refused to join in the general mood of rejoicing<sup>①</sup>.

This was Don Pedro's illegitimate<sup>②</sup> brother, Don John. Don John was very jealous of his brother, and he was always plotting<sup>③</sup> against him. One of his plots had recently failed, and the two brothers had only just become friends again.

One of Don John's friends was Conrad.

'You should be more cheerful, sir,' Conrad advised. 'You and the Prince are friends again. Everything is going well.'

'I can't help it,' Don John told him. 'I don't feel cheerful. I don't like my brother, and I'm forced to be polite to him.'

Just then another of Don John's friends came into the room.

'What's the news, Borachio?' Don John asked.

Borachio smiled.

'There is news, sir,' he announced. 'Claudio is going to marry Hero.'

'How do you know?' Don John asked quickly.

'I heard Don Pedro and Claudio talking in the house,' Borachio told him. 'They've made a plan. Don Pedro is going to win Hero at the party tonight, and then he's going to give her to Claudio.'

'Claudio!' Don John said impatiently. 'I hate that young man. Here I am always in disgrace<sup>④</sup>, and Claudio is my brother's favourite. I wish I could do something that would damage Claudio.' He looked at Conrad and Borachio angrily. 'Will you two help me?'

Conrad and Borachio bowed deeply. They knew that Don John was always

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① rejoicing: 欢庆。

② illegitimate: 私生的。

③ plotting: 密谋陷害。

④ in disgrace: 受人鄙视。

plotting against somebody.

## Chapter Three: Voices Behind Masks

There was a grand dinner in the hall of Leonato's house before the party. Everybody ate and drank well, and there was music and laughter.

'Is Don John here?' Leonato asked Antonio. 'I haven't seen him.'

'What an angry man he is!' Beatrice commented. 'He just sits there, he never says anything at all. Still,' she went on, 'he's not like Benedick—that one talks far too much. Really, uncle,' she joked, 'a perfect man would be half like Benedick and half like Don John!'

'I hope you find a man like that one day,' Leonato told her kindly. 'I'd like to see you married, Beatrice.'

'I'll never marry, uncle,' Beatrice replied. 'I don't like beards.'

Her uncle laughed.

'What's wrong with a man with a beard?' he asked.

'A man with a beard is too old for me,' Beatrice said.

'What if the man you marry doesn't have a beard, Beatrice?' he asked.

'Impossible!' Beatrice replied sharply. 'A man without a beard is too young for me.'

Antonio turned to Hero. He was thinking about the offer of marriage that he was sure Don Pedro would make her at the party.

'You'll do as your father wants, I hope?' he asked her gently.

'Of course she will!' Beatrice interrupted. 'Hero will do her duty. She'll always say, "as you wish, father," it's her nature.' She paused for a moment. 'But if the man is ugly, Hero, you should refuse him, and say, "as I wish, father." That's what I would do!' she said defiantly<sup>①</sup>.

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<sup>①</sup> defiantly: 桀骜不驯的。

When dinner was finished, everyone went to change for the dance. They put on masks, and splendid costumes, and then came back into the main hall. The servants had removed the tables, and there was now space for dancing.

Don Pedro approached Hero.

'Will you walk with me?' he asked her tenderly. 'I have something to tell you.'

'I'll walk with you if you are handsome, and if you don't talk too much,' Hero told him.

'I want to talk about love,' Don Pedro said gently. He led her away from the other people in the hall.

Soon everyone was involved in exciting conversations.

Don Pedro's servant, Balthazar, was also wearing a mask. Balthazar was in love with Margaret, one of Hero's ladies-in-waiting<sup>①</sup>. He came up to Margaret and began to speak to her.

'I wish you liked me,' he began.

'It's a good thing for you that I don't like you,' Margaret replied. 'You see,' she joked, 'I have a lot of bad qualities.'

'Bad qualities,' Balthazar repeated. 'What are they?'

'I say my prayers out loud,' Margaret told him.

'I loved you before you told me that,' Balthazar said, 'but now I love you even more. Anyone who hears you pray can say, "amen".'

Benedick decided to punish Beatrice for her rudeness. He came up to her in his mask.

'Someone told me that you're not really witty<sup>②</sup> at all,' he said. 'You get all of your jokes from books - that's what this person said.'

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① ladies-in-waiting: 高级女仆。

② witty: 风趣。

'I bet it was Benedick who said that,' Beatrice replied. 'He doesn't like me at all — it's just the kind of thing Benedick would say about me!'

Benedick was enjoying himself. He could see that Beatrice was angry. 'Benedick?' he asked her. 'Who's Benedick?'

'Surely you know who Benedick is?' Beatrice said.

'I don't know him,' Benedick insisted. 'Who is he?'

'Oh, he's Don Pedro's clown<sup>①</sup>,' Beatrice said angrily. 'He's a fool really, and not funny at all. He just says rude things about everyone, and that makes fools laugh. If people don't laugh at what he says, he gets very unhappy. He thinks he's very clever, but everyone hates him, really.'

The music and dancing went on until very late in the night. At last it was over, and the masked figures began to leave the great hall.

Don John had been watching the dancers with his friends Conrad and Borachio. Don John had seen Don Pedro talking to Hero. He was sure that the Prince was in love with her. He looked gloomily<sup>②</sup> at the few people who were still in the hall. Then he saw a man's figure. He recognised Claudio.

'You're Benedick, aren't you?' he asked.

'I am,' the man replied.

'You're a friend of my brother the Prince,' Don John said. 'Please tell him that he cannot marry Hero. She does not come from a noble family.'

'Marry her?' the masked man said. 'What makes you think Don Pedro wants to marry Hero?'

'I heard them talking,' Don John replied. 'He told her he loves her. I don't like the news — I don't like it at all!'

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① clown: 小丑。

② gloomily: 闷闷不乐地。

Don John walked away with Conrad and Borachio.

Claudio leant<sup>①</sup> against the wall.

'So the Prince has tricked<sup>②</sup> me,' he thought angrily. 'He was only pretending to win Hero for me — now he has won her for himself!'

Benedick came into the hall. He was looking for his friend.

'You've heard the news?' he asked. 'The Prince has stolen Hero from you, Claudio!'

Claudio groaned<sup>③</sup> loudly.

'Leave me alone, Benedick, just leave me alone!' he cried.

Benedick turned to leave his friend. His own thoughts were not happy ones.

'She said I was Don Pedro's clown,' he thought. 'Do people really call me that? Do they call me that because they think I'm stupid, or because they think I'm witty? Or was it something that Beatrice just invented? Perhaps they don't call me that at all!' he thought. 'What a horrible girl she is — I hate her!'

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① leant: 倾斜。

② tricked: 欺骗。

③ groaned: 呻吟。

## Chapter Four: Two Brothers, Two Plans

Benedick was walking out of the hall when he met Don Pedro. The Prince asked him where Claudio was. 'He's in the hall, sir,' Benedick said coldly. 'He's very upset<sup>①</sup> about what's happened. You shouldn't have stolen Hero from him.'

'Stolen Hero? I haven't stolen Hero from Claudio,' Don Pedro said. 'I've just asked Leonato if Claudio can marry her! By the way, Benedick,' he went on, 'Beatrice is angry with you. What's all that about?'

'It's a silly business, sir,' Benedick said. 'That girl is always so rude to me — I can't stand<sup>②</sup> her!'

Soon they could hear happy voices and laughter from the hall. Claudio came out holding Hero by the hand. Beatrice and Leonato were with them.

'You see, Benedick,' the Prince said happily, 'I told you the truth. Leonato has said that Claudio and Hero can be married. Now do you believe that I'm Claudio's friend?'

'Yes, I believe you,' replied Benedick, 'but please excuse me now. I don't want to talk to Beatrice.' He left the room.

The Prince turned to Claudio with a big smile. 'What do you say, my young friend? I won Hero for you, didn't!?'

Claudio blushed<sup>③</sup>.

'I'm so happy that I don't know what to say,' he began. 'I...'

'You say something then, Hero,' Beatrice interrupted. 'Or better still, just kiss him — then neither of you has to say anything!'

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① upset: 对...感到伤心。

② can't stand: 无法容忍。

③ blushed: 脸红。



Suddenly she looked serious.

'Everyone is getting married except me,' she said quietly.

'I'll find you a husband,' Don Pedro offered.

Beatrice laughed.

'Thank you, sir, but I'll never marry,' she replied. She turned to Claudio and Hero. 'Congratulations to you both,' she said kindly. 'I'm happy for you.'

Leonato signalled to Beatrice to leave them. Beatrice bowed to the Prince and left.

Don Pedro was very pleased with himself. He had promised Claudio that he would win Hero for him, and he had succeeded. Now he began to wonder<sup>①</sup> if he could not find a husband for Beatrice as well.

'Well, my friend, you'll be a married man one week from now,' he remarked.

'It'll be the longest week of my life,' Claudio said. 'I wish the wedding were tomorrow!'

Suddenly an idea occurred to Don Pedro.

'I know you're impatient to be married,' he said to Claudio and Hero. 'But we'll make this week a very pleasant one for you both, I promise. I'm going to arrange another wedding - between Beatrice and Benedick!'

Everybody laughed. They thought the Prince was joking.

Don Pedro held up his hand.

'No, I'm serious,' he told them all. 'I think I can do it. But I shall need your help. What do you say, Leonato — will you help me to arrange it?'

'I'll do everything I can,' Leonato said. 'But I don't see how you'll manage<sup>②</sup> it, sir. Benedick and Beatrice hate each other!'

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① wonder: 自问。

② manage: 做成某事。

'What about you, Claudio - will you help me?' the Prince asked.

'Of course I will,' Claudio replied.

'And you, Hero? Will you help as well?' Don Pedro asked.

'I'll do everything I can to get a good husband for Beatrice,' Hero told him.

'A good husband,' Don Pedro said thoughtfully. 'I think Benedick will be a good husband for Beatrice, you know. This is what we'll do,' he said excitedly.

The Prince began to explain his plan.

'The Prince's brother, Don John, was also busy with plans of his own. He knew now that it was Claudio who was going to marry Hero, and not the prince. Don John decided to spoil<sup>①</sup> the wedding because he wanted to hurt his brother and Claudio. He discussed the matter with Borachio.

'I've got an idea, sir!' Borachio said excitedly. 'I think I know how we can spoil this wedding.'

'Well, what is it?' Don John asked impatiently. 'What are we going to do?'

Borachio explained that he was very close to Margaret, Hero's lady-in-waiting.

'Very close, sir, if you understand me,' he said with a smile. 'Close enough to go to her bedroom at night!'

'What does that matter?' Don John wanted to know. 'How can that help us?'

'It's very easy to go from Margaret's room to Hero's,' Borachio said with a smile.

'I still don't understand what you mean,' Don John told him. 'What are you going to do?'

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<sup>①</sup> spoil: 破坏。

Borachio explained his plan.

'Don Pedro thinks that Hero is a beautiful and honourable girl. Go and tell him that you have discovered that she is not honourable at all, sir. Tell the Prince that Hero has a secret lover — me! Say that you can prove it. Wait until it's late at night. Make Claudio and Don Pedro stand under Hero's bedroom window. I will then stand at the window. I'll talk to Margaret as if she were Hero — and Margaret will seem to be Hero, Don't you see, sir?' he asked excitedly. 'The Prince and Claudio will think Hero is in love with me — Claudio will call off<sup>①</sup> the wedding!'

'What about Hero?' Don John asked. 'What if she hears you and Margaret talking?'

'Don't worry, sir,' Borachio promised. 'I'll make sure that she isn't in her room that night.'

'It might just work!' Don John said quietly. 'Let's try your plan, Borachio. If it works, I'll give you a thousand ducats<sup>②</sup>.'

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① call off: 取消。

② ducats: 金贝。

## Chapter Five: Benedick and Beatrice in the Garden

Benedick was walking in Leonato's garden. He was thinking about his friend Claudio.

'He's certainly very different now that he's in love with Hero,' he told himself. 'Claudio and I used to be very similar. We used to laugh at men who fell in love. Now look at him! He's lost his interest in the army, all he cares about is Hero and what she thinks!'

Benedick shook his head impatiently.

'No,' he told himself, 'I like women, but I'll never fall in love with one. That's for sure!'

Just then he saw the Prince and a group of men coming into the garden. One of the men was Claudio.

'The great lover!' Benedick laughed to himself. 'I'll hide here, and hear what Claudio and the Prince are talking about.'

The Prince, however, had already seen Benedick in the garden. He touched Claudio on the arm, and pointed to where Benedick was hiding.

'Remember my plan to make Benedick fall in love with Beatrice,' he said softly<sup>①</sup>.

Don Pedro called Balthazar loudly.

'Let's have some music, my friend,' he commanded. 'I want to hear that song you were singing before.'

Balthazar stepped forward. The musicians began to play, and Balthazar started to sing. His song was about love. The song suggested that women should not trust men—all men were liars about love.

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<sup>①</sup> softly: 轻声地。

*Sigh<sup>①</sup> no more, ladies, sigh no more,  
Men were deceivers<sup>②</sup> ever<sup>③</sup>;  
One foot in sea, one foot on shore,  
To one thing constant<sup>④</sup> never.  
Then sigh not so,  
But let them go,  
And you'll be blithe<sup>⑤</sup> and bonny<sup>⑥</sup>,  
Converting all your sounds of woe<sup>⑦</sup>.  
Into hey nonny, nonny.*

Everyone applauded<sup>⑧</sup> when the song was finished.

'That was a good song, my friend,' Don Pedro told Balthazar. 'Remember that we shall want some good songs tomorrow night. We're all going to sing outside Hero's bedroom window.'

'I shall do my best,' Balthazar replied politely. He bowed to the Prince and walked back to the house with the musicians.

Don Pedro waited until Balthazar and the musicians were out of sight. Then he looked at the place where Benedick was hiding, and winked<sup>⑨</sup> at Claudio. Claudio smiled back at him.

The Prince began to speak in a loud voice to Leonato.

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① sigh: 叹息。

② deceivers: 情场骗子。

③ ever: 总是。

④ constant: 忠诚。

⑤ blithe: 欢乐。

⑥ bonny: 健康愉快地。

⑦ woe: 痛苦。

⑧ applauded: 鼓掌。

⑨ winked: 眨眼示意。

'What was that you were saying before?' he asked. 'Something about Beatrice being in love with Benedick?'

Leonato winked back at Claudio and Don Pedro before he replied.

'It's true, sir,' he said very seriously. 'I can hardly believe it myself. Beatrice has always been rude to Benedick — but she loves him, there's no doubt about that.'

'Perhaps she's just pretending to be in love,' Don Pedro said. 'What makes you think she's really in love?'

'She told you all about it, didn't she?' Leonato said to Claudio. 'Did you think she was pretending?'

'She's really in love,' Claudio replied. 'The poor girl loves Benedick desperately, she told me herself. But she'll never say anything to him. She can't tell him, you see, because she's always been so rude to him. She thinks Benedick would just laugh at her.'

'She's even tried writing a letter to tell him what she feels,' Leonato said. 'But she didn't send it. She tore the letter up. Poor girl, she's suffering very badly!'

Don Pedro was very pleased at the way his plan was going. He found it difficult not to laugh. He controlled himself, however.

'Why don't we tell Benedick that Beatrice is in love with him?' he suggested. 'Perhaps we could help Beatrice by letting him know.'

'No, no, you mustn't do that!' Claudio interrupted. 'It would do Beatrice no good. Benedick would just laugh at her. We mustn't say anything, sir.'

The men stayed in the garden for a while longer, and then they all went back into the house.

Benedick remained<sup>①</sup> in the garden by himself. He was very surprised at what he had heard. He began to think about Beatrice in a new way.

'It's true she's a beautiful girl,' he told himself. 'She's also a very honourable girl, there's no doubt about that. They say she loves me.'

His ideas about Beatrice began to change.

'Perhaps I've been wrong about her,' he thought. 'She's a lovely girl, after all!'

He began to walk slowly back to the house. He was very thoughtful.

Suddenly, he saw Beatrice in the garden. He was pleased to see her, and he smiled at her.

'I've been sent to look for you,' Beatrice told him coldly. 'Dinner is ready and everyone is waiting for you.'

Benedick decided to be very polite to Beatrice now that he thought she loved him.

'Thank you for the trouble<sup>②</sup> you have taken to find me,' he said courteously<sup>③</sup>.

'Trouble?' Beatrice repeated. 'It was no trouble to come and look for you.'

'If it was no trouble, perhaps it was a pleasure to come and look for me?' Benedick asked gently.

'What makes you think it was a pleasure?' Beatrice replied angrily. She walked away from Benedick.

Benedick followed her into the house.

'There's no doubt about it,' he thought. 'She's in love with me, all right. She said it was "no trouble" to come and look for me. She really does love me!'

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① remained: 逗留。

② trouble: 烦劳。

③ courteously: 彬彬有礼地。

The first part of Don Pedro's plan had gone well. Benedick was sure that Beatrice loved him, and he was beginning to look at her in a different way.

Now it was Hero's turn to persuade Beatrice that Benedick loved her. She went into the garden with her two ladies-in-waiting, Ursula and Margaret. She sent Margaret to look for Beatrice.

'Tell her that we're talking about her,' Hero ordered Margaret. 'Tell her to come and listen to what we say.'

Margaret went back into the house, and soon Beatrice came into the garden. Beatrice approached Hero and Ursula carefully, so that she would not be seen. She listened to the conversation of the two girls. At first she could not believe what she was hearing.

'So you see,' Hero was saying to Ursula, 'poor Benedick is terribly<sup>①</sup> in love with Beatrice.'

'Are you sure about that?' Ursula asked. 'I thought that Benedick did not like Beatrice at all. '

'It's true,' Hero told her. 'Claudio and the Prince told me all about it. They asked me to talk to Beatrice, but I said it would do no good. Beatrice is very proud, and she would just laugh at poor Benedick.'

'You're probably right,' Ursula agreed. Then she went on in a loud voice. 'Beatrice is so proud that she can't love anyone. It's better not to say anything to her about Benedick. She would just make the poor man suffer horribly with her cruelty and her jokes.'

'I'm going to talk to Benedick,' Hero said. 'I'm going to help him if I can. I'm going to tell him that he's far too good for Beatrice.'

Ursula sighed deeply.

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① terribly: 极度地。



'It's true that Benedick is a very handsome man,' she said softly. 'Many women would be happy if he fell in love with them.'

Ursula and Hero began to walk back to the house. They knew that Beatrice had been listening to their talk. They both wanted to laugh at the trick they had played on Beatrice, but they managed to look serious.

Beatrice was not pleased at what she had heard.

'My friends think I am too proud to love!' she told herself. 'They say Benedick loves me. They say he is a good man. Perhaps they're right—perhaps I should love Benedick!'

## Chapter Six: Benedick Suffers for Love

Later that day the Prince and Leonato were talking to Claudio and Benedick.

'I must go home after your wedding, my friend,' Don Pedro told Claudio.

'Then I will accompany you on the journey,' Claudio offered, 'It's the least I can do after your kindness to me.'

'Nonsense!' the Prince replied, 'Your place is with your new wife. You don't want to go on a long Journey just after your wedding. No, I'll take Benedick with me. He's the man I want. The journey will be short once he starts telling his jokes and stories.'

'The truth is, I'm not as witty as I once was,' Benedick admitted. 'I don't know why it is.'

Don Pedro and Claudio exchanged a secret smile with each other. They knew why Benedick was more serious than he had been. They knew he was thinking about Beatrice.

'You do look quite sad,' Claudio told his friend sympathetically. 'Is anything the matter?'

'It's just a toothache,' Benedick replied crossly<sup>①</sup>. 'It'll pass.'

'Toothache?' Don Pedro said. 'I never knew that toothache could make a man look sad, Benedick.'

Benedick blushed fiercely<sup>②</sup>.

'I think he's in love,' Claudio said with a laugh. 'Look at the careful way he's dressed, and the trouble he takes with his hair - he's a man in love, I tell you!'

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① crossly: 生气地。

② blushed fiercely: 满脸通红。

'You may be right,' Don Pedro agreed. 'That would explain why he looks so sad, as well.'

Benedick did not enjoy his friends' jokes. He frowned<sup>①</sup> for a moment, and then he suddenly turned to Leonato.

'Come with me, sir,' he said quickly. 'I have something important that I want to ask you.'

Leonato and Benedick walked away together.

'He's going to speak to Leonato!' Don Pedro said excitedly. 'He's going to ask for permission to marry Beatrice.'

There was a knock at the door, and Don John came into the room. He bowed politely to Claudio, and then spoke to his brother.

'I have something to tell you,' he said very seriously.

'Something to tell me?' the Prince repeated slowly. 'Is it something private, or can Claudio stay and hear?'

'What I have to say also concerns Claudio,' Don John replied. Now he spoke to Claudio. 'I know you are getting married tomorrow,' he said. 'My news is about Hero,' he went on. 'I've discovered that she is not an honourable girl — she has a lover!'

Don Pedro and Claudio were shocked by Don John's words. They did not know what to say. For a moment neither of them said anything.

'I know it's hard to believe,' Don John continued, 'but I'm telling you the truth. I can prove that Hero is disloyal to you. Come with me tonight, both of you. We'll stand outside Hero's bedroom window — you'll see what I've told you is the truth!'

'I can't believe it!' Claudio said angrily.

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① frowned: 皱眉。

'Nor me!' Don Pedro agreed.

'I'm telling you the truth,' Don John said firmly. 'I don't want you to make a terrible mistake, Claudio. You can't marry a girl who behaves like Hero — she would dishonour<sup>①</sup> you!'

Claudio thought for a moment. He loved Hero, but he was also very proud. He did not like the idea that Hero might be making a fool of him. At last he made up his mind.

'Very well,' he told Don John, 'I'll come with you tonight. And if you're right about Hero,' he decided angrily, 'I'll disgrace her at the church tomorrow morning — I'll tell everyone what sort of girl she is!'

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<sup>①</sup> dishonour: 令人羡慕。

## Chapter Seven: The Constables do Their Duty

Most of the people who were staying at Leonato's house went to bed early that night. They were all going to Claudio and Hero's wedding the next morning and they wanted to rest.

Leonato's house was protected at night by the local constables. Dogberry was in charge of them, and his second in command was Verges. They had decided to employ extra men because of the presence of the Prince in the house, and the important wedding.

Dogberry was not a very intelligent man, but he was honest, and he took his duties very seriously. He looked at the new recruits<sup>①</sup> carefully.

'Right,' he announced, 'you must all listen to me. I'll tell you what you have to do. You walk around the gardens at night, and if you see anyone strange, you stop them. Is that clear?'

'What do we do if the person doesn't obey us?' one of the new constables asked.

'If that happens, don't do anything,' Dogberry told the man.

'If someone doesn't obey you, let him go. That kind of person can be dangerous, you know!'

'Another thing,' Dogberry went on. 'Don't make a noise as you walk about. We don't want to disturb people. Don't wake people up by talking loudly.'

'I'd rather sleep than talk,' one of the new constables joked.

'Well said!' Dogberry told the man. 'You can't make any mistakes if you go to sleep. But remember,' he continued, 'you have to go to all the alehouses<sup>②</sup>. Tell the people who have drunk too much that they should go home to bed.'

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① recruits: 新成员。

② alehouses: 酒馆。

'What if they don't obey us?' someone asked again.

'Leave them alone if they don't obey you,' Dogberry advised.

'You don't want to get into arguments with people who have been drinking. And the same for thieves,' he told them. 'If you meet any thieves, stay away from them. No good can come from mixing with thieves.'

Dogberry and Verges left the new constables outside Leonato's house. They sat quietly and began talking about their new job.

'It'll be easy,' one of them said happily. 'We'll just sit quietly here for a couple of hours, and then we'll all go home to bed.'

Borachio and Conrad were also outside Leonato's house. They were talking excitedly to each other.

'I've just earned a thousand ducats!' Borachio boasted<sup>①</sup>.

One of the new constables heard Borachio's voice. He made a sign to the others to be quiet.

'Something's going on,' he warned them. 'I know that man, and I don't trust him. He must be up to something<sup>②</sup>! Let's listen, and see what happens.'

The constables sat very quietly and listened.

'A thousand crowns!' Conrad said. 'How did you earn such a lot of money?'

'It was easy,' Borachio boasted again. 'I spent the evening with Hero's lady-in-waiting, Margaret,' he explained with a laugh. 'She's just leant out of Hero's window to say goodnight to me. Claudio and the Prince saw everything!'

'They thought Margaret was Hero?' Conrad asked.

Borachio laughed again.

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① boasted: 吹嘘。

② up to something: 密谋某事。

'That's right. Claudio is furious with Hero — he'll never marry her now!'

The constables had heard enough. They decided to arrest Borachio and Conrad. They did not understand what the two men were doing, but they were suspicious. Suddenly they moved forward.

'You're under arrest!' one of them said loudly. 'You must come with us.'

Borachio and Conrad looked at the constables in surprise. They did not know what to do.

'Come on,' the constables said again, 'you two are coming with us. Dogberry will want to talk to you.'

Dogberry and Verges arrived at Leonato's house very early the next morning. They were both excited and very pleased with themselves. They asked to speak to Leonato.

Leonato smiled at the two men. He was in a very good mood because of the wedding of Hero and Claudio.

'Well, my friends,' he said politely, 'what can I do for you? As you can imagine, this is a very busy day for me.'

'I'll tell you, sir,' Dogberry began.

'That's right,' Verges said hurriedly.

'Please forgive my colleague, sir,' Dogberry said to Leonato. 'He is an old man, and he is a little confused in his thoughts. But he is a very honest man, all the same.'

'Very true, that's very true,' Verges agreed. 'I am an old man - but I'm an honest old man. Very true, very true — you expressed that very well!' he complimented<sup>①</sup> Dogberry.

Leonato was a little impatient now.

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<sup>①</sup> complimented: 恭维。

'If you have something to tell me, please say it!' he ordered.

'The constables have arrested two thieves,' Verges said.

'Correct,' Dogberry confirmed. 'The constables have arrested two thieves — and we would like to question<sup>①</sup> them in front of you, sir. That's why we're here, sir.'

'Question these men yourselves,' Leonato said. 'I'm too busy today. Question them, and come and tell me what you've learned from them later.'

'Yes, sir,' Dogberry said eagerly. 'We'll question them for you. We'll find out everything, I can promise you that.'

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<sup>①</sup> question: 查问。



## Chapter Eight: A Wedding Scandal

All of Leonato's guests went to the church to see the wedding of Claudio and Hero. There was a lot of happy conversation as they waited for the priest to begin the service.

'Let's have a quick ceremony, Friar Francis,' Leonato advised.

The friar nodded<sup>①</sup> his head, and then he began the ceremony. First he turned to Claudio.

'Have you come here to marry Hero?' he asked.

The young man looked at the friar for a second before he answered. 'Then he said loudly, 'No, I have not.'

For a moment Leonato was astonished. Then he smiled.

'Quite right, quite right,' he said. 'Claudio has come here to be married to Hero — it's you who will marry Hero, friar!'

The friar turned to Hero.

'Have you come here to be married to Claudio?' he asked her.

'Yes, I have,' Hero replied.

The friar looked seriously at Hero and Claudio for a moment.

'Do either of you know anything that makes you think this marriage should not take place?' he asked.

Claudio looked at Hero fiercely.

'Do you know any reason why we should not marry?' he asked her.

'No, I don't,' Hero told him.

'And you, Claudio, do you know any reason?' the friar asked.

'Of course he doesn't!' Leonato interrupted. Claudio now turned to Leonato.

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<sup>①</sup> nodded: 点头。

'Are you happy to give me your daughter?' he asked.

'Yes, I am,' Leonato replied.

'Must I give you something in exchange for this precious gift?' Claudio asked.

'Of course not,' Leonato said.

'Unless you give her back to him!' interrupted Don Pedro.

Claudio now raised his voice.

'Leonato, take your daughter back again,' he began. 'Don't give your friend a rotten<sup>①</sup> gift. Your daughter looks lovely, admit, but she's dishonourable. I don't want her!'

There was a shocked silence in the church. Everyone was listening to the conversation between Claudio and Leonato.

'Speak honestly,' Leonato ordered Claudio. 'What are you trying to tell me?'

'I will never marry Hero,' Claudio replied loudly. 'She is disloyal.'

Hero blushed. She could not believe what Claudio was saying about her.

'Are you well?' she asked him faintly.

Leonato spoke to the Prince. He hoped that Don Pedro would be able to help him.

'Say something, sir,' he suggested.

'What can I say?' the Prince replied very seriously. 'I am ashamed that I encouraged Claudio to marry Hero. She is not worthy of him<sup>②</sup>.'

Leonato was astonished.

'I can't believe that this is happening,' he said. 'Tell me it's all a bad dream!'

'I want to ask your daughter one question,' Claudio told Leonato. 'Tell her

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① rotten: 糟糕。

② is not worthy of him: 配不上他。

to answer it truthfully, please.'

'I order you to answer his question truthfully,' Leonato told Hero. 'You must tell the truth.'

Claudio studied Hero's face for a moment before he spoke.

'You were speaking to a man from your window last night,' he told her. 'Who was that man?'

'I didn't speak to any man last night,' Hero answered him.

'You're lying!' Don Pedro told her angrily. 'We were outside your window last night, Claudio and I. We saw you talking to a man, Hero!' He turned to Leonato. 'It's all true, my old friend, I swear<sup>①</sup> it,' he said sadly. 'Your daughter has a lover.'

Don John now stepped forward. He was very pleased at the effect of his plan.

'It's no good,' he said to Hero. 'We know what kind of girl you are. I'm sorry for your wickedness!' he added.

Suddenly Hero went very pale. She began to tremble<sup>②</sup>, and then she fell to the floor of the church. She lay on the floor without moving.

Don John looked down at her where she lay on the floor.

'Come on,' he said to the Prince and Claudio. 'This is no place for us.' He led them out of the church.

Benedick and Beatrice ran forward to help Hero.

'Help her!' Beatrice cried. 'Help her, uncle!'

'She'll be all right in a minute,' Friar Francis said gently. 'She's only fainted.'

'All right!' Leonato said angrily. 'I hope she dies, friar! Hero has brought

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① swear: 发誓。

② tremble: 颤抖。

dishonour on our family. I hope she dies,' he repeated angrily.

Friar Francis held up his hand.

'Listen to me,' he said to Leonato. 'I have been watching Hero very carefully. I believe that she is innocent. You can call me a fool if you like,' he went on, 'but I believe there has been a mistake.'

'No, friar,' Leonato said sadly. 'It's impossible, I'm afraid. You heard what Claudio and the Prince said. They both saw her talking to a man from her window — the evidence is clear!'

Hero now opened her eyes. She looked up at the crowd of people standing around her. The friar spoke to her gently.

'Were you speaking to a man last night?' he asked her kindly.

'No, friar,' Hero replied. 'I swear it, I'm telling the truth, friar.'

'I believe her,' Friar Francis said again. 'There has been a mistake.'

'Claudio and Don Pedro are both honest men,' Benedick said thoughtfully. 'They would never invent a story like this. But Don John,' he went on, 'he might have done it! Don John hates the Prince.'

'I will never forgive Hero if she is lying,' Leonato said, 'but I will defend her if someone is lying about her. I may be an old man,' he announced proudly, 'but I can still fight to protect my family!'

'I have an idea,' the friar said quietly. 'Claudio and the others think that Hero is dead. Let's pretend that she really is dead for a while. You, Leonato, prepare a lavish<sup>①</sup> funeral for her.'

'I don't understand, friar,' Leonato said. 'What's the point of pretending that Hero is dead?'

'When people hear that Hero is dead,' the friar explained, 'they will feel

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① lavish: 豪华。

sorry for her. Claudio will remember that Hero died as a result of his accusation. He will wonder whether he was right about her. That will be one good result.'

Benedick liked the friar's suggestion.

'Claudio is my best friend,' he said, 'but I like this plan of yours, friar. I'll do everything I can to help you.'

'Very well,' Leonato agreed. 'We will pretend that Hero is dead.'

Friar Francis and Leonato left the church secretly with Hero. Benedick and Beatrice were alone together. Benedick looked tenderly at Beatrice.

'Have you been crying all this time?' he asked her gently

'Yes, and I think I'm going to go on crying for a while,' Beatrice replied.

'I think Hero is innocent,' Benedick told her.

'I wish someone could prove that she's innocent,' Beatrice said.

'I have something strange to tell you,' Benedick began softly, 'I don't know how this has happened, but I love you, Beatrice.'

'How strange,' Beatrice replied. 'I feel the same. I don't know how it's happened, but I think I love you, too.'

'I'd do anything for you!' Benedick told her eagerly.

'Kill Claudio, then!' Beatrice answered.

'Kill Claudio? Never!' Benedick replied in surprise.

'Then you don't really love me,' Beatrice said sadly. 'You won't fight my enemy.'

'Why is Claudio your enemy?' Benedick asked.

'Claudio has behaved very badly,' Beatrice said angrily. 'He didn't cancel the wedding when he heard this story about Hero. No, he came to the church, and then he accused her in public - I hate him for what he has done to Hero!'

'Listen, Beatrice...' Benedick interrupted her.

'She would never talk to a man from her window,' Beatrice continued angrily. 'She loves Claudio, I know she does!'

'Do you really think that Claudio has behaved badly?' Benedick asked.

'Of course I do!'

'Then I'll fight him" Benedick announced. 'I love you, Beatrice — I'll fight Claudio for you,' he promised.

## Chapter Nine: Dogberry and his Men Discover the Truth

Leonato was very angry and disturbed by what had happened in the church. His brother, Antonio, tried to calm him, but it was no good.

'Don't tell me to be calm!' the old man cried. 'I love Hero, and I can't bear the idea that she has been dishonoured. I can't bear it, I tell you!' he shouted.

'Don't make yourself suffer,' Antonio advised him. 'Think of the people who accused her. It's only right that they should suffer, too.'

'You're right,' Leonato agreed. 'I'm sure that Hero is innocent. Claudio and the Prince have lied about her.'

Suddenly, the Prince and Claudio appeared. They were embarrassed to see Leonato and his brother after what had happened. They bowed awkwardly<sup>①</sup> and began to walk away.

'Just a moment,' Leonato called after them. 'I want to speak to you. You have wronged my daughter.'

'Don't quarrel with us,' Don Pedro advised him.

'You, Claudio, you have behaved badly,' Leonato shouted. 'You lied about Hero, and now she's dead. I'm going to fight you, young man!'

'You're too old for fighting,' Claudio replied. 'I won't fight you, Leonato.'

Antonio stepped forward angrily.

'Then you'll fight me, young man,' he announced. 'I'm not too old for fighting. I loved my niece. You'll fight me, I say!' he repeated.

Now Leonato was worried. His brother did not know that Hero was still alive.

'I can't let him fight Claudio,' Leonato thought. 'I must stop him.'

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<sup>①</sup> awkwardly: 尴尬地。

'Brother...' he began.

'Leave me alone!' Antonio said roughly. 'I'm not scared of fighting him. I know what these young men are like!'

'But, Antonio.' Leonato said desperately.

'Leave me alone, I say!' Antonio said to Leonato. 'Let me deal with<sup>①</sup> this.'

'Don't quarrel, gentlemen,' the Prince said again. 'I am sorry that Hero's dead,' he told Leonato. 'But she was guilty, my friend. She was guilty.'

Leonato held onto his brother's arm.

'Come on,' he ordered him. 'We'll make them listen to us another time.'

Leonato and Antonio walked away. Don Pedro and Claudio stood talking together. They were glad that they had avoided a fight with Leonato and Antonio. Then they saw Benedick approaching.

'Just the man we want to see,' Claudio told him happily. 'We're both sad, Benedick. We need you to cheer us up a little.'

Don Pedro looked closely at Benedick. He noticed that the young man was very pale.

'What's the matter?' he asked.

Benedick ignored the Prince, and spoke quietly to Claudio.

'I'm going to fight you,' he whispered fiercely. 'You choose the weapons, and you choose the time. But if you don't fight me, I'll tell everyone you're a coward!'

Don Pedro did not hear what Benedick said to Claudio. He thought the two young men were having a joke together. He decided to tease<sup>②</sup> Benedick a little about Beatrice.

'It's really true that Beatrice loves you,' he said pleasantly. 'You'll be a

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① deal with: 处理。

② tease: 取笑。



married man soon, my friend - just as I told you!' he predicted with a laugh.

Benedick did not smile at the Prince's joke.

'My lord,' he said politely, 'you have always treated me well. I thank you for that. I will not serve you any longer. Your brother Don John has left Messina. The three of you have killed an innocent young child.'

Benedick walked away from Don Pedro and Claudio. He was very angry with them.

'He's serious,' Don Pedro said in surprise. He thought for a moment. 'My brother's left Messina—I wonder why!'

Just then Dogberry and some of his men came into sight. They had Borachio and Conrad with them.

'Isn't that Borachio and Conrad?' Don Pedro said to Claudio. 'I wonder why they're prisoners!' he called out to Dogberry. 'Stop! Tell me why these two men are prisoners. What have they done!'

Dogberry bowed to the Prince and Claudio.

'These two men,' he told them, 'are liars. They have told lies about a lady here in Messina, and they are bad men.'

Don Pedro now spoke to Borachio.

'What have you done?' he asked.

Borachio looked ashamed.

'This constable here has found out the truth,' he said, pointing to Dogberry. 'He heard me telling Conrad about Don John's plan to deceive you and Claudio. It was your brother who invented the story about Hero. It was Margaret you saw in Hero's clothes talking to me. Hero was innocent. And now she's dead. I am very sorry, sir.'

'Poor Hero!' Claudio groaned. 'I should have believed in you.'

He began to weep<sup>①</sup>.

'Leonato knows everything by now,' Dogberry said to the Prince. 'We sent him a message as soon as we discovered the truth. But here he is,' he said, 'I see him coming now.'

'Where's the man who killed my daughter with his lies?' Leonato shouted loudly.

Borachio looked ashamed.

'It was me, sir,' he said humbly. 'I killed your daughter.'

'You didn't do it by yourself,' Leonato told him angrily. 'Don John, Don Pedro and Claudio are also responsible for her death.'

'You're right, Leonato,' Claudio said quietly. 'I was wrong, I treated Hero badly. You must punish me if you wish. But I made an honest mistake.'

'Me, too,' Don Pedro said sadly. 'I made an honest mistake, but you have suffered, Leonato. I wish I could do something to help you.'

'You can't bring my daughter back,' Leonato said sternly. 'But there is something you can both do for Hero. Tell the people of Messina that my daughter was innocent. And tonight, go to her grave and pray for her there. Write an epitaph<sup>②</sup> for her tomb. Will you do that for Hero?'

Don Pedro and Claudio agreed to go to Hero's grave that night.

'And you, Claudio,' Leonato went on, 'there's something else you can do. My brother Antonio has a daughter. She's very like poor Hero. Marry my brother's daughter, just as you would have married mine. Will you do that?'

Claudio bowed his head.

'I'll marry your niece,' he said. 'It's the least I can do to make peace between us again.'

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① weep: 哭泣。

② epitaph: 悼词。

'Then come to my house tomorrow morning,' Leonato ordered. 'In the meanwhile, I want to speak to Margaret — I don't believe she knew anything about Don John's wicked plan.'

'She didn't, sir!' Borachio said. 'Margaret's a good girl— she knew nothing about it!'

Meanwhile Benedick had decided to write Beatrice a poem. He was not a good poet, however, and writing was difficult. The first line of the poem came easily:

*'The god of love,'*

'That's good,' he thought, 'very direct and very romantic. Now what shall I put?' He thought for a moment, and then he wrote:

*'The god of love,*

*That sits above.'*

'This is easy!' he told himself. He thought again.

*'The god o love,*

*That sits above,*

*And knows me, and knows me,*

*How much I deserve...'*

Benedick threw the pen down onto the table in disgust. He could not think of anything else to say. He went for a walk in Leonato's garden. Here he met Beatrice, and the two lovers began talking.

'I've spoken to Claudio,' Benedick told her. 'He knows he has to fight me, or I will tell everybody that he's a coward. But tell me,' he asked, 'what made you fall in love with me?'

'All your bad qualities,' Beatrice joked. 'There are a lot of them, you know. And what about you,' she asked, 'what made you love me?'

'I never meant to love you,' Benedick told her simply. 'And how is Hero?'

he asked seriously.

'She's very unhappy,' Beatrice told him.

Suddenly, they heard someone running towards them. It was Ursula, one of Hero's ladies-in-waiting. She called loudly to Beatrice.

'You must come quickly, Beatrice,' Ursula said. 'Everything's going to be all right. Hero's innocent — it was all a plot by Don John to hurt the Prince and Claudio. Come quickly!'

Benedick and Beatrice smiled at each other. This was good news indeed.

'Let's go and hear this news together,' Beatrice suggested.

'Let's,' agreed Benedick. He held out his hand, and Beatrice took it. They walked quickly towards the house.

## Chapter Ten: Two Weddings

That night Claudio and Don Pedro went back to the church, as they had promised Leonato. Claudio had composed an epitaph for Hero. He read from the poem as he walked along:

*Hero was killed by slanderous<sup>①</sup> tongues*

*And here she lies.*

*Death rewards her awful wrongs*

*By giving her fame that never dies.*

*The life that died with shame*

*Lives on in glorious fame.*

Don Pedro and Claudio stayed near the tomb all night, praying and talking about Hero. They were both very sad. At last the inside of the church began to grow light — it was morning.

'Come on, Claudio,' Don Pedro said, 'it's time to go to Leonato's house. Remember you are going to marry Antonio's daughter this morning - you promised you would.'

Claudio stood up. He was tired after the long night in the church.

'I'm ready,' he said quietly. 'I hope this wedding will be happier than the last one!' He looked sadly towards Hero's tomb as he spoke.

There was great excitement in Leonato's house that morning. The friar, in particular, was very happy.

'I told you Hero was innocent!' he kept saying to Leonato. 'Didn't I say she

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① slanderous: 诽谤地。

was innocent all the time?'

Leonato smiled at the friar.

'And Claudio and Don Pedro are innocent, as well,' he said. 'It was all Don John's fault - and the Prince will surely see that he is punished for what he did. Margaret was innocent as well,' he went on. 'It's true that Borachio was her lover — but she did not know anything about the wicked plot against Hero.'

'I'm glad that everything's worked out<sup>①</sup> well,' Antonio said.

'Me, too,' Benedick said. 'I thought I was going to have to fight my best friend Claudio.'

'Now, Antonio,' Leonato said, 'you know what we're going to do when Claudio and Don Pedro arrive. Claudio has promised to marry your daughter. We will pretend that Hero is your daughter. She will wear a heavy mask. Claudio will be marrying the girl he loves, but he won't know it — it'll be a great joke!' he cried with a happy laugh.

'I must say something, sir,' Benedick told Leonato. 'I'm in love with your niece, Beatrice, and she's in love with me — I want your permission to marry her.'

'Just as Don Pedro and Claudio predicted!' Leonato said with a smile. 'I give you my permission to marry Beatrice.'

'And I will perform the ceremony!' the friar offered excitedly.

It was not long before Don Pedro and Claudio arrived at Leonato's house. They exchanged polite greetings with everyone.

'Well, Claudio,' Leonato said sternly, 'do you remember your promise? Are you ready to marry Antonio's daughter?'

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<sup>①</sup> worked out: 结果。

'I'll keep my promise,' Claudio said seriously.

'Go and call her,' Leonato ordered Antonio.

Antonio came back into the room a few minutes later with Beatrice, Hero, Margaret and Ursula all wearing masks — it was impossible to see their faces.

'Which one am I going to marry?' Claudio asked nervously.

Antonio pointed to Hero.

Claudio stepped forward.

'We are going to be husband and wife,' he said gently. 'May I see your face before the wedding?'

'No!' Leonato cried. 'You may not see her face until the wedding is concluded.'

'Then take my hand,' Claudio said. 'I will lead you to the friar. I will be your husband if you wish it.'

He put out his hand. Hero put out her own hand, and grasped<sup>①</sup> his.

'I've been your wife before,' she said quietly. She removed her mask.

Claudio looked into her face. He gasped, and tears came into his eyes.

'Another Hero!' he whispered in astonishment.

'The first Hero died in shame,' Hero said quietly, 'and here I am, another one.'

'It really is Hero!' Don Pedro cried. 'She didn't die at all!'

Claudio stood in silence. He could not speak for happiness. The friar touched his arm.

'I'll explain everything,' he said softly. 'But first, let's have the wedding!'

Now Benedick stepped forward.

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① grasped: 紧抓。

'One moment, Friar Francis,' he said softly. 'Which one is Beatrice?'

Another girl in a mask came forward.

'I am,' she answered quietly. 'What do you want, Benedick?'

'Do you love me?' Benedick asked her.

'Beyond reason<sup>①</sup>, no,' she replied with a smile.

'Then Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato were wrong,' Benedick said. 'They told me you loved me madly<sup>②</sup>.'

'And you,' Beatrice asked. 'Do you love me, Benedick?'

'Beyond reason, no,' he answered with a smile.

'Then Margaret, Ursula and Hero were wrong,' Beatrice told him. 'They said you loved me madly.'

'They told me you were sick for love of me,' Benedick said.

'They told me you were nearly dead for love of me,' Beatrice replied.

'Then you really don't love me!'

 Benedick asked her.

'Not really,' Beatrice admitted. 'I only love you because you love me.'

'This is all nonsense!' Claudio said loudly. 'Benedick loves Beatrice, I'm sure of it. Look, I've got a poem he wrote to her!' Claudio showed the others Benedick's poem.

Now Hero spoke as well.

'And Beatrice loves Benedick!' she said loudly. 'I've got a letter she wrote to him. Look, here it is!' She showed everyone Beatrice's letter to Benedick.

Benedick laughed.

'We do not love each other,' he joked, 'but it seems our hands are in love. Let's marry, all the same.'

Beatrice laughed as well.

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① beyond reason: 不可理喻。

② madly: 狂热地。



'I'll marry you,' she joked, 'but only to save your life, Benedick — they said you were so unhappy without me!'